THE SAINT OF THE *WOODS*, OR THE LOVES OF SIFFRED, AND THE MAID OF BRABANT.

Shewing how she was accused of Adultery, and turned into the dreary Deserts, where her Child was nursed by a white Hind, and how she lived seven Years without any other Nourishment than what she gathered in the Woods, till at last she was discovered, her Innocence proved, and she was restored to the Arms of her Lord.

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THE

SAINT OF THE WOODS.

FROM ancient Brabant's princely race,
The artleſs Geneviva ſprung:
Youth ſmil'd upon her blooming face,
And Virtue's precepts grac'd her tongue.
Though twenty barons bold eſſay'd
In tournaments to ſnare her charms,
Earl Siffred claim'd the lovely maid,
And won her to his gallant arms.
The ſoft delights that lovers prove,
When firſt in ſhady groves they meet,
Such bliſs was theirs---their wedded love,
How chaſte, how innocent, how ſweet!
What ſpeaking ſighs, what ſilent vows,—
Each day preſenting ſomething new:
The turtles on their garden boughs,
Might well have learnt from them to woo:

But ſhrieking fifes, and roaring drums,
The bridegroom's frighted ear invade:
And lo! a dreadful ſummons comes,
To cite him to the dire cruſade.

Honour and love his thoughts divine,
To ſtay is death—but ah! to part—
To leave his fond, his faithful bride,
The mere idea rends his heart.
One morning grey, ere Sol appears,
While Genevieve ſecurely ſleeps,
He bathes her ſnowy hand with tears,
And ſoftly from her pillow creeps.
The pang that ſhook the warrior's breaſt,
At this ſad moment who can tell?
A laſt embrace he fears to wreſt,
Nor dare he bid her once farewel.
He parts—he turns—at length he flies—
Ah, Genevieve! thy fate's decreed!
For ere thou open'ſt thy ſtarry eyes,
He guides afar his prancing ſteed.

Lovely in tears appear'd the bride,
Her treach'rous ſteward view'd her charms,
And ev'ry fordid project try'd,
To lure her to his guilty arms.
Deep-bluſhing, Genevieve decries
The action which her ſoul abhorr'd,
When lo! the vengeful traitor hies,
With ſland'rous tales to wound her Lord.
Earl Siffred could have quitted life,
Wealth, honours, all, with equal mind,

And but have wept to leave his wife,
His deareſt Genevieve behind.
But when he learnt her ſad diſgrace,
"Adultreſs turn'd,"—Oh! baneful ſound!
How did he ſtand, with pallid face,
Heart-ſtruck, and all his ſenſes bound.
Her death's reſolv'd—the mandate ſent—
When ſoon the earl laments her fate:
"Save her," he cry'd, "I now relent.
Raſh man, the pardon comes too late:
The ſteward knew thy gen'rous ſoul
Was oft by meek ſubmiſſion bow'd;
And haſten'd with the fatal ſcroll
To dam the ſtream whence mercy flow'd.

Fair Genevieve had lately been
By all a mother's pains oppreſt:
The loveliеſt boy that e'er was ſeen
Hung ſmiling on her ſnowy breaſt.
Two hir'd aſſaſſins guide her ſteps
Acroſs a foreſt, wild and wide:
The mother ſcreams—the infant ſleeps,—
The infant to the mother tied.
"Dear friends avert that fatal knife,
"Ah! ſpare," ſhe cry'd, "in accents wild,
"In pity ſpare my wretched life,
"Or take my life, but ſpare my child."
Sweet Innocence, thy power's confeſt,
The readier villain ruthful ſtands—
His lifted arm thy tears arreſt,
The ſteel eſcapes his trembling hands.
"Fly Genevieve—ſome ſtrange remorſe
"Unharms me—let thy fears ſubſide:

" To yonder wood quick ſhape thy courſe,
" And in the tufted branches hide."
The wretched mother graſps her child,
Reviews its charms with ſtreaming eyes;
And ſoon ſhe 'ſcapes the dreary wild,
And through the leafy wood ſhe flies.

Ah! helpleſs victim, nurs'd in eaſe,
What ſuſtenance canſt thou procure
'Midſt ſolitary rocks and trees?
Or how the midnight ſtorm endure?
Drear evening comes—by want oppreſt,
The infant yields a piercing cry,
And ſeeks the mother's throbbing breaſt,
But grief has drain'd its fountain dry.
Ye feeling minds, the live-long night,
Her nature ſhiver'd—morn aroſe;
Yet morning with its gladſome light,
Alas! but ſerv'd to ſwell her woes.
In ſearch of fruits and bluſhing haws
Among the ruſtling boughs ſhe ſtrays;
With dread returns—yet why that pauſe?
What object meets her ardent gaze?
Beneath a ſpreading elm reclin'd,
The ſmiling infant, void of fear,
Is ſuckled by a milk-white hind,
Whoſe playful fawn is gamb'ling near.
Great God! a tender mother's heart,
Of all thy works, is nobleſt grown;
Her child will live, his cares depart,
And Genevieve forget her own.
Hard by a wretched hovel ſtood,
In which were recent traces found
Of hungry bears that rov'd for food,

And wolves that made the wood reſound.
And here, depreſt by deadly fears,
Lamenting her untimely doom,
O'erwhelm'd with miſery and tears,
The wanderer finds a wretched home.

Meanwhile the earl accounts his bride,
Already rank'd among the dead:
And now ſtrange doubts his mind divide,
For now he fears ſhe guiltleſs bled.
What words, alas! can paint his grief?
A ſickly terror chills his veins,
Reſolv'd on death he ſeeks relief
'Midſt hoſtile troops, on diſtant plains.
But death for ever flies the brave,
The Earl is ta'en,—the battle o'er:
Behold him like the vileſt ſlave
Condemn'd to tug the lab'ring oar.
Seven years his cruel chains he bears,
At length his native home ſurveys:
Yet ah! how ſad that home appears,
How widely chang'd ſince former days.
His hall, where merry ſongſters roar'd,
No thrilling note of gladneſs yields;
Nor fragrant dainties grace his board,
Nor flocks adorn his ſlighted fields.
Lo! ſtruggling in the arms of death,
The ſteward found a ſhort reprieve,
And with his laſt expiring breath,
Confirm'd the truth of Genevieve.

Since Siffred heard the fatal news,
Dire images his ſoul affright:

Slow ſtalking, near his couch he views
Her bleeding ſhade each ſtarry night.
" Ah! barb'rous ſpouſe, belov'd in vain,
" Behold your ſpotleſs bride," ſhe cries.
The 'frighted earl attempts t' explain,
But ere he ſpeaks the phantom flies.
Grief clouds the morning of his days,
No eaſe he knows, but in the chaſe,
From dawn to dewy eve he ſtrays,
The terror of the ſavage race.
As through the ſhady woods he went,
A milk-white hind one morn he 'ſpy'd;
And ſcarce his twanging bow was bent
Ere the ſwift ſhaft tranſpierc'd her ſide.
Entangled in a deep moraſs,
His wounded prey he ſoon o'ertakes:
Conducted by the ruffled graſs,
And crimſon drops that ſtain the brakes,
Who lo! a groan aſſails his ears,
And, ſpringing from the gloomy wild,
A naked female form appears,
Whoſe arms ſupport a weeping child.
Bluſhing, and ſonceleſs to the view,
The beauteous ſavage ſhook with fear:
O'er her bare breaſts her hair ſhe drew,
And ſhrunk behind the bleeding deer.
" Unhappy mourner, dry thoſe tears;
" Why ſhunneſt thou the human race,
" To waſte the ſpring time of thy years,
" Within this ſolitary place."
" Dread Sir, my lov'd inhuman lord
" Has chas'd me from his marriage bed:
" Barely I 'ſcap'd his vengeful ſword,
" When to theſe trackleſs ſhades I fled."

" Ye heav'ns, why ſhakes my golden frame?
" Whence cam'ſt thou? ſpeak?—dare *I*
believe ——"
" From ancient Brabant."—" And thy name?"
" My hapleſs name is Genevieve."
" O God! thy mercies I implore,
" Sustain theſe feeble ſprings of life,
" While I careſs my child once more,
" Once more embrace my guiltleſs wife."
Thus Siffred ſpoke.—His gliſt'ning eyes
Quick rang'd q'er Geneviva's charms;
And, whilſt ſhe ſhudder'd with ſurprize,
He caught her in his circling arms.

THE END.